

**Minutes of the Meeting of the  
Rehabilitation Advisory Committee (RAC)  
held at 3:00 p.m. on 24 January 2005 in Room 2005,  
20/F., Murray Building, Garden Road, Hong Kong**

**Present**

Dr Joseph KWOK Kin-fun	(Chairman)
Dr York CHOW	Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food
Ms Iris CHAN Sui-ching	
Dr Margaret CHUNG Wai-ling	
Ms Christine FANG Meng-sang	
Mrs Doris HO KO Suet-yiu	
Mr Herman HUI Chung-shing	
Mr IP Kwok-chung	
Dr IP Yan-ming	
Mr Lawrence LEE Kar-yiu	
Mrs Julie LEE LAU Chu-lai	
Dr Simon LEUNG Man-on	
Prof LEUNG Ping-chung	
Mrs Olivia LEUNG WU Kwai-man	
Mrs Jackie MA LAI Bik-lin	
Prof Arthur MAK Fuk-tat	
Dr TSE Tsun-him	
Ms WONG Kwai-wan	
Mr YEUNG Ka-sing	
Mr Anthony YEUNG Kwok-ki	
Mr Paul K W TANG	Director of Social Welfare
Miss Ophelia CHAN	Assistant Director (Rehabilitation and Medical Social Services) Social Welfare Department

Mrs Betty IP	Principal Assistant Secretary (School Administration & Support) Education and Manpower Bureau
Dr Catherine LAM	Consultant Pediatrician (Child Assessment Service) Department of Health
Ms Linda LAI	Deputy Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food (Family & Women) Health, Welfare and Food Bureau
Mrs Mary MA	Commissioner for Rehabilitation
Mr Wilson CHAN	Assistant Secretary/Rehabilitation Health, Welfare and Food Bureau (Secretary)

**In attendance**

Mr Tony TANG	Principal Education Officer Education and Manpower Bureau
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**Absent with Apologies**

Mr CHONG Chan-yau	
Dr Daisy DAI	Senior Executive Manager Hospital Authority

**Welcoming Remarks**

**The Chairman** welcomed Members to the first meeting of the year 2005, in particular Dr York CHOW, the Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food (SHWF). **A member** thanked Members for their past contributions and hoped that they would continue to offer advice to Government on issues related to rehabilitation policy.

## **Agenda Item I – Confirmation of Minutes**

2. The minutes of the meeting held on 7 September 2004 were confirmed.

## **Agenda Item II – Matters Arising**

### **Strategic Directions for Rehabilitation Services (para 4 to 27 of the minutes of the last meeting)**

3. **The Chairman** advised that the Administration's follow-up action on the Strategic Directions for Rehabilitation Services would be discussed under Agenda Item 4 – the Proposed Approach for Review of Rehabilitation Programme Plan.

## **Agenda Item III – Policy Initiatives for People with Disabilities for 2005 [ RAC 1/2005 ]**

4. **The Administration** took Members through the highlights of the new and ongoing initiatives in respect of rehabilitation policy in the 2005 Policy Agenda. **A member** said that two principles were embedded in the Bureau's major policy initiatives, i.e., support for people with disabilities (PWDs) to live in the community and cross-sectoral collaboration in the delivery of rehabilitation services. In the coming year, our focus would be on (a) enhancement of quality of life of PWDs; (b) planning of an arts festival for the disabled, the idea of which he would further pursue with SHA and relevant parties; and (c) strengthening of district welfare planning and coordination to assist DSWOs to analyze local needs and collaborate with relevant departments, NGOs, other service providers and local groups to develop our services and to instill ownership at district level. Relating to (b), **the Chairman** commented that the Annual Performance of the

Jockey Club Arts for the Disabled Scheme and the International Day of Disabled Persons on 3 December 2004 were a great success.

5. In response to a member's enquiry on the new initiative to provide vocational training and employment assistance to disabled young persons with employment difficulty, **the representative of SWD** said that while LD and SWD provided a full spectrum of employment support services, special school graduates and youths with early mental health problems needed more targeted support such as intensive vocational training and on-the-job training, and hence the new initiative. She added that the new services would be planned in consultation and collaboration with EMB, VTC and relevant NGOs. **The Administration** supplemented that there was closed coordination among EMB, HWFB and VTC to ensure no overlapping of services.

6. In response to a member, **the representative of SWD** said that job-matching services would be provided to help match the talents of the disabled young graduates with the needs of employers. **A member** remarked that courses offered at VTC skill centres might not be as rewarding as on-the-job training in a real working environment.

7. **A member** recognized Government's past efforts on provision of community support services and enquired how the new initiative on additional community support would interface with existing ones. **The representative of SWD** responded that the initiatives were service enhancements and would be funded by new resources. With details under planning, the views of parents/carers, self-help groups and service providers collected in various service reviews, seminars and discussion forums would be taken into account.

8. In response to a member, **the representative of SWD** also said that LD had an ongoing Placement cum Mentor Scheme for PWDs on trial which offered similar incentive payment as SWD's On-the-Job Training scheme. Yet its target group, being PWDs in general, was different from that of SWD's new employment assistance scheme, which would focus on special school or mainstream school graduates with early mental problems or autistic features as these clients would benefit much from continual vocational training but could not mingle well in the environment of the Institutes of Vocational Education.

9. On the initiative of \$100 monthly supplement for CSSA recipients living in the community and suffering from 100% disability or requiring constant attendance, **a member** asked for the breakdown of disability types and age distribution of the beneficiaries. **The representative of SWD** responded that about 50,000 disabled CSSA recipients might benefit and further breakdowns were not available.

10. **A member** appreciated the significance and benefits of the relaxation measures to facilitate elderly citizens to retire in the Mainland while in receipt of CSSA and OAA payments. He said that the quality of healthcare services in Mainland was a primary concern for elderly citizens in considering the scheme and wondered whether Government would consider addressing their concern. He also asked whether figures on the Portable Comprehensive Social Security Assistance Scheme (PCSSA) were available. **The representative of SWD** clarified that CSSA was a means-tested safety net of last resort, while OAA was a largely non-means tested allowance to elderly in light of their old age. He said that the PCSSA had been implemented for 6 to 7 years and so far there had been over 3000 cases. The fair response could be explained not only by concerns on healthcare in Mainland, but also family ties in Hong Kong.

He added that participants of the Scheme could return to Hong Kong for medical treatment whenever necessary. He also explained the reason for the extension of the scheme to Fujian, which was the province with the second largest number of elderly recipients of CSSA as their home province. On OAA, **the representative of SWD** did not expect the relaxation of the permissible limit of absence from 180 to 240 days to attract many elderly recipients to reside in the Mainland due to the reasons mentioned about and the relatively lower level of payment. **A member** pointed out that for non-severe diseases, medical insurance schemes in the Mainland should be able to offer adequate coverage for local treatment. As regards severe diseases, elderly citizens could always return to Hong Kong for treatment.

11. **A member** appreciated the provision of new Rehabuses and opined that it was long-awaited by service users. She looked forward to the implementation of the Partnership Fund for the Disadvantaged and wondered whether the Head-Start Programme could be offered to families of mentally ill/handicapped children as statistics indicated high divorce and suicide rates among them. She also asked whether service users could be allowed to participate in District Liaison Groups. **A member** pointed out that transport service was essential for people with disabilities to live in the community. Apart from new provision of Rehabuses, the Bureau was working with concerned parties to come up with reliable estimates of number of people with disabilities, with a view to reaching consensus with public transport operators. On Head-Start Programme, he said that it would focus not only on medical, but also on caring problems faced by families which required early attention, assessment and intervention. He also assured the meeting that service users would be encouraged to participate in review of welfare services at district level.

12. **A member** cautioned that more attention should be given to address the needs of persons suffering from anxiety and depression. In response, **the representative of SWD** said that the new initiative to provide specialized support services for young persons with early signs of mental health problems was intended for this purpose. **A member** remarked that our rehabilitation services for mentally ill patients should achieve towards a goal shared by the Health Adviser of the World Health Organization to help them live in the community instead of disposing them in large mental institutions.

13. **A member** also stressed on the cost-effectiveness of measures to prevent transition from primary into secondary handicap and the importance of prioritization, coordination and streamlining of services. **A member** shared his view and hoped that the District Liaison Group mechanism would address issues in relation to coordination of services.

14. Turning to promotion of employment for PWDs, **a member** recognized the importance of the On-the-Job Training scheme and suggested financial incentives such as tax exemption be offered to employers. **A member** did not support quota system since it had not proven successful overseas and could marginalize disabled employees in the society. In response to a member's query on Government's definition of safety net, **A member** said that Government did not have a rigid definition and would help those who need a helping hand.

15. **A member** referred to recent media reports on Government's intention to raise medical fees and charges and expressed concern. She also urged HA to prescribe better and sufficient quantity of medicine to such patients. **A member** stressed that Government was now receiving views from Legislators and the community with no concrete proposal yet

on new fees and charges. He also emphasized the need to address the problems faced with our health care system and the roles of the private and public sector.

16. **A member** pointed out that the information paper provided useful elaboration on the strategic directions of HWFB in the coming years and hoped that resource could be wisely deployed on the priority areas identified. **A member** agreed and said that we should target to help those most in need as resources were limited, the principle of which should be embedded in the review of the Rehabilitation Programme Plan (RPP) to be discussed in the next agenda item.

**Agenda Item IV - Rehabilitation Programme Plan – Proposed Approach for Review [RAC 2/2005]**

17. **A member** said that cross-sectoral collaboration was vital to the future planning and development of our rehabilitation services and invited Members to give their views on the proposed approach for the RPP review, which should (a) identify target groups of PWDs and their various needs; (b) determine shortage and surplus of service provision and focus on target areas; and (c) work out the implementation timetable.

18. **The Administration** took Members through the paper. She said that RAC had given in-principle support at the last meeting for the future strategic directions for rehabilitation services and the next step was to begin the review of the RPP to map out future development of rehabilitation services. The paper outlined our proposed approach for the 12-month review for RAC's endorsement.



19. **A member** suggested the review to take stock of not only existing services, but also facilities on accessibility for PWDs in Government and NGO properties. She wondered whether the Design Manual - Barrier Free Access 1997 (DM97) had been properly enforced and suggested modules on compliance be included in the coursework of architecture programs in universities. She also drew Members' attention to a survey on public lavatories for the disabled which was conducted by the Rehabilitation Alliance Hong Kong (RAHK). The result stated that of the 99 government and private buildings surveyed, 4 did not have disabled toilets and none of the 95 toilets in the other buildings complied with DM97.

(Post meeting note: the Building Department (BD) is following up on the results of the survey released by RAHK. For contravention to the DM97, BD will issue an order to require building owners concerned to rectify the contravention.)

20. **The Administration** shared a member's concerns and remarked that all newly constructed or substantially altered government offices should comply with DM97. She considered that on top of following the basic requirements of the Manual, the designs should be user-oriented and address the real needs of PWDs and such facilities should be properly maintained and managed. She said that barrier-free access in a cosmopolitan city like Hong Kong was a very important issue, even more so as we were on the run-up to Beijing 2008 Paralympics. She expressed that the Paralympics would attract influx of disabled visitors to Hong Kong and we should take stock and improve the inadequacy of accessible facilities, else our city's international image would be tarnished. HWFB and the Tourism Commission were working together in this respect. **A**

member concurred and added that she had carried out a survey three years ago on availability of hotel rooms and bathrooms specially designed for disabled customers and to her dismay, only 2 hotels within the territories offered such facilities.

21. **The Administration** undertook to convey Members' concerns on compliance of the DM97 to Buildings Department (BD). She also advised that BD was conducting a review on the DM97 which should be completed in 2005. Government had a list of scheduled improvement works on government offices to enhance accessibility which could be included in the next RPP. **A member** shared with Members the experience of a district commendation scheme in Shum Shui Po (SSP) which aimed to give tribute to housing estates with quality accessible facilities. She was also concerned about the general reluctance of private property owners to comply with the requirements laid down in the DM97.

22. **The Chairman** asked on behalf of a member, who had left the meeting earlier, whether community-based services would be reviewed, and forums for service users would be conducted in the RPP review. **The Administration** replied in the affirmative.

23. **A member** pointed out that a designated Working Group would be formed for the review of RPP to consider operational issues and the meeting's discussion could focus more on the proposed approach and framework for the review.

24. In response to a member's question on the time-frame and directions of the next RPP, **the Administration** said that since the review would take a more broad-based and high level approach following the strategic directions endorsed by RAC, the output would reflect

development of our rehabilitation policy and would be updated as and when appropriate. **A member** also said that the RPP review should cover services provided by various departments and consider how to enhance inter-departmental coordination. Opportunity should be taken to review the principles set out in the 1995 White Paper on Rehabilitation such as independent living and self-help and district consultations should be held. **The Chairman** noted the suggestions and said that they should be left for the future Working Group to follow up.

25. **Members** endorsed the proposed approach for the review of RPP. **The Administration** advised that a briefing session to announce the launch of the review would be held on 4 February 2005 from 11:00 am to 12:30 pm at Leighton Hill Community Hall. The Chairman invited Members to attend the session.

26. As an aside, **a member** said that some private employers were concerned about integration of disabled employees within the work environment and the legal implications. **The Chairman** said that he would convey the concern to EOC.

**Agenda Item V – Reforming the Academic Structure for Senior Secondary Education and Higher Education – the arrangements for special schools [RAC 3/2005]**

27. **The Chairman** said that the issue had profound impact on our future generations and the society as a whole. He noted that EMB's 3-month consultation on the proposed changes to the academic structure for senior secondary education and higher education had ended on 19 January 2005 and asked whether there would be future consultations and Members' views would be taken into account. **An attendee** replied that EMB would

in its final report to be issued in the second quarter of this year set out the direction for changes to the senior secondary education structure having regard to the results of the consultation. EMB would conduct consultation for the second draft of the curriculum framework and seek feedback from parties concerned on individual topics on need basis.

28. **The attendee** took Members through the proposed changes to academic structure and curriculum development. He said that EMB had conducted discussions with special schools since early December 2004 on planning for the educational service for the students with special needs under the proposed reforms. It was agreed that students with special educational needs would be provided the same opportunity to receive 6-year secondary education. The experience from the extension of years of education programme for the mentally handicapped students would be taken into account. He also advised that a total of 2800 opinions were received during the 3-month consultation on the proposed reforms to the academic structure and the curriculum framework. Majority of respondents supported the changes. About 60% of respondents supported the proposed career-oriented curriculum and EMB had set up a taskforce in this regard. The final report would be issued in mid 2005. Meanwhile, consultation with special schools and other stakeholders of special education would continue.

29. In response to a member's enquiry on support for mainstream schools with special education classes to help them implement the school reform measures, **the representative of EMB** said that according to the existing arrangement, there were different programmes to provide additional staffing resources to schools to cater for students with special educational needs (SEN) including those academic low achievers. The number of additional teachers provided ranged from 1 to 3 teachers for

some programmes. Schools were encouraged to adopt whole-school approach to providing support to these students with SEN. Moreover, EMB has already set aside \$550 million in the Education Development Fund to provide School-Based Professional Support to targeted schools, to help them implement Education Reform measures. Besides, EMB would strengthen the roles and functions of the Special Education Resource Centre, enhance training and professional support for teachers and organize theme-based seminars; and encourage special schools to share their professional experience with relevant mainstream schools. **The representative of EMB** remarked that in some cases the real challenge for mainstream schools lied in the readiness of able students and their parents to accept disabled students to the school community which explained why public education on social inclusion was so important. She assured the meeting that EMB would continue to consider additional school-based support services to meet the needs of special education.

30. **The Chairman** shared with Members on the success of an integrated school, how a peer helper student, through supporting a disabled student, became much improved in own academic performance. He said that school-based support services should be further strengthened and set out in more detail in subsequent consultation on the proposed reforms.

31. In response to a member, **the representative of EMB** said that EMB had a team of educational psychologists who would provide advice to schools on the assessment, and management of behavioural, emotional and learning problems of students with SEN. In cases of profound disabilities and multiple disabilities, the students might benefit from schooling in special schools. **A member** opined that normal persons as well as mentally ill persons could have deviant behaviours and characteristics which lied outside of the normative patterns, and mental illness should not

be automatically associated with violent behaviour. He noted that specialized support services were not always available to people with deviant behaviours. **Another member** shared his concerns.

32. On the consultation document, **a member** pointed out that it had only a small coverage on special education and the needs of mentally handicapped students were not mentioned at all. He recalled that at a meeting with stakeholders on 20 December 2004, SEM said that the 3-month consultation ended on 19 January 2005 was only the first round and the needs of students with special educational needs would be catered for in the new system differently. **This member** also recalled SEM's promise to address the reforms and support services for special education in the second stage of consultation. He asked EMB when a paper on such proposals would be ready.

33. **An attendee** said that discussions at consultation sessions with special schools would be taken into account in mapping out the details of reforms to special education for inclusion in the final report on "Reforming the Academic Structure for Senior Secondary Education and Higher Education – Actions for Investing in the Future". The bureau would continue consultation with the sector.

34. **A member** commented that parents of disabled students, as partners with Government and schools in the provision of special education, should also be consulted on the proposed reforms. She also shared a case with Members about the grievance of parents of a student with special education needs who was first placed to a mainstream school but later reallocated to a special school due to adaptation difficulties. She urged EMB to pay more attention to the special needs of the disabled children during assessment and school placement.

35. **A member** said that the proposed career-oriented curriculum were relevant to vocational rehabilitation and should have good interface with Vocational Training Council's Career Oriented Curriculum. **Another member** was concerned that the scope of the curriculum might be vertically limited due to the small size of a class. While courses such as car-washing were proven successful, care should be taken to avoid disproportionate focus which might result in stereotyping.

36. **The Chairman** asked EMB to take into account the views and suggestions expressed by Members in the formulation of the detailed proposal on changes to be made to special education for subsequent consultation.

**Agenda Item VI – Promotion of Employers' awareness on the acceptance of people with disabilities – Employment Awareness Programme [RAC 4/2005]**

37. **The Chairman** said that while legal protection of disabled employees against discrimination and unfair treatment was important, employers in Hong Kong often took an attitude of passive observance of the law instead of proactive adoption of disability friendly practice in manpower development and workplace. RAC could play an important role in facilitating such a paradigm shift. He also shared with Members his experience of participation in conferences on employment of PWDs held by the National Business & Disability Council in US and Employers' Forum on Disability in UK.

38. **A member** supported and said that employment of PWDs should be promoted as a benefit to the employers and the society rather than as a mere fulfillment of corporate social responsibility. Business sector was

image and profit-oriented and incentives such as commendation and tax exemption should be considered.

39. **A member** felt that SWD and LD had similar programmes run and was concerned about duplication of efforts. **Another member** believed that senior management of our employers might still be unfamiliar with Government's rehabilitation services and have various misconceptions towards people with disabilities as information provided by SWD and LD could hardly reach up the company ladder. He shared with Members the fundraising experience of Community Chest and suggested RAC members to help approach the top echelon in private sector to effectively get across the message and achieve results.

40. **The Chairman** suggested and Members agreed to support the recommendations of the paper. **A member** undertook to follow up on the details of the programmes at the Sub-committee on Employment.

#### **Agenda Item VII – Any Other Business**

##### **Public Transport Fare Concessions for People with Disabilities**

41. **The Chairman** said that he had received a request from the Chairman of the Sub-Committee on Access for discussion of the issue of public transport fare concessions for PWDs at RAC. He advised Members that HWFB was in full support of the proposed fare concessions and would work pro-actively with ETWB and TD to estimate the number of PWDs for fare concession in order to facilitate liaison with public transport operators.



## **West Kowloon Cultural District**

42. On the development of West Kowloon Cultural District, **a member** suggested that it should include an accessible venue for the display of visual and performing arts by disabled artists. After some discussion, the meeting agreed that RAC should write to the Chief Secretary for Administration (CS) on the above suggestion.

(Post meeting note: a letter was issued by the Chairman on 2 March 2005 to CS to convey the suggestion.)

## **Arts Festival for the Disabled**

43. **A member** asked whether the arts festival proposed by SHWF earlier in the meeting was an extension of the Jockey Club Arts for the Disabled Scheme (the Scheme). **Another member** commented that the main objective of the Scheme was to help PWDs to develop their potential in the arts and cultural fields and to eventually excel through their artistic abilities. Funding for the Scheme should not be diverted to the proposed arts festival. **The Administration** said that the proposed arts festival was a new idea and **HWFB** would follow up with HAB closely.

44. **A member** appreciated a long-term arts festival to provide much-needed exhibition opportunities at community facilities such as public libraries for the excellent artwork of local disabled artists. **The Chairman** commented that the proposed arts festival for the disabled could gather more community support with the assistance of HAB. Sustainability would be further enhanced if districts could take turn to host their own annual arts festival with localized themes. **The Administration** shared with Members the European experience in integrating disabled arts

into the community. There, such artworks were on display for sale at public places which helped nurture an artistic culture and appreciation of disabled arts within the society. **The representative of SWD** supplemented that SWD and NGOs would seize opportunities to exhibit disabled arts in popular leisure and community facilities but issues such as convenience of location and duration of display had to be negotiated. She hoped that the proposed arts festival could help in this respect.

45. Separately but related, **a member** invited Members to visit the annual exhibition of the Joint Special Schools Music and Arts Festival being displayed at Hong Kong Arts Centre. The exhibition was a product of the Jockey Club Arts for the Disabled Scheme.

#### **Date of Next Meeting**

46. There being no other business, the meeting adjourned at 5:30pm. The next meeting would be held in mid 2005. **The Secretary** would inform Members of the details nearer the time.

Rehabilitation Division  
Health, Welfare and Food Bureau  
Government Secretariat

April 2005